

**NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT
ISLANDER EYE HEALTH CONFERENCE 2025**

**SEEING
OUR WAY**

27 - 29 MAY 2025 | Whadjuk Noongar Boodja, Boorloo (Perth)

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

CONTENTS

3. **WELCOME FROM LOSE FONUA CEO FNEHA**
4. **WELCOME FROM SHAUN TATIPATA CO-CHAIR FNEHA**
5. **WELCOME RECEPTION**
6. **GALA DINNER AND AWARDS**
8. **KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**
11. **AGENDA DAY 1**
12. **AGENDA DAY 2**
14. **AGENDA DAY 3**
16. **TABLE TOPS**
24. **ABSTRACTS**
36. **SILVER SPONSORS**
37. **THE FIRST NATIONS EYE HEALTH ALLIANCE LIMITED**
38. **THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands, skies, and waterways throughout Australia. We acknowledge the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the land and affirm that sovereignty was never ceded.

We pay respects to our elder's past, present and emerging. We thank our elders for their guidance and commitment to the advancement of our communities. We stand in solidarity with the stolen generation and their families, calling for healing and justice for the atrocities suffered by individuals, families, and communities.

Finally, we acknowledge the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have or continue to work tirelessly in eye health and vision care, to close the gap in preventable vision loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities so they can be healthy and flourishing.

LOCATION

We gather on the beautiful lands of the Whadjuk Noongar People at The University Club of Western Australia, Hackett Entrance, 1 Hackett Dr, Crawley WA 6009.

DISCLAIMER

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this program and other Conference resources may contain images and voices of deceased persons.

ARTWORK

'Connecting Land, Sky and Water', created by contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist Dennis Golding expresses Aboriginal peoples connection to land, sky and water since time immemorial. Our history shows how our people have cared for Country including the waterways and land that provides us sources for life and culture. This artwork recognises how the First Nations Eye Health Alliance aim to provide pathways, support and care into our community for better outcomes in health and wellbeing. It acknowledges how communities who come from all parts of country including salter water, freshwater regions, to connect and work together as one. The artwork allows people to see the roots of Country, the cultural practices on land, the tracks we mark, the waters we live off and around, and the stories we reflect and connect to from sky Country.

SUPPORTED BY OUR MAJOR SPONSORS

SILVER SPONSORS



CONFERENCE CO-HOST



CONFERENCE COVENOR





Dear Delegates, Partners, and Friends,

It is with immense pride and heartfelt warmth that I welcome you to the 2025 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference (NATSIEHC25), held on the sacred lands of the Whadjuk Noongar people at The University Club of Western Australia in Perth. This year marks a significant milestone as the First Nations Eye Health Alliance (FNEHA) convenes NATSIEHC25 for the first time.

Our theme, 'Seeing Our Way', embodies the evolution of self-determination and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in eye health and vision care. It creates a forum of "seeing through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lens" to position and strengthen our current and future state of eye healthcare sector projects and initiatives.

Our conference program is a testament to the strength and resilience of our communities. It brings together inspiring speakers, engaging panel discussions, and impactful workshops, all cantered on sharing knowledge, strengthening partnerships, and driving action. These sessions are designed to empower attendees, foster collaboration, and ignite meaningful change in eye health outcomes for our people. We extend our deepest gratitude to our sponsors whose generous support has made this conference possible. Our Silver Sponsors, The Fred Hollows Foundation and Roche, along with our Bronze Sponsors and Co-Host University of Western Australia.

As we gather on Whadjuk Noongar Country, we honour the enduring connection of the Noongar people to this land and pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging. Let this conference be a space of learning, reflection, and unity as we work together to eliminate avoidable vision loss and blindness in our communities.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. Together, we are building our vision, **OUR WAY**

Warm regards,

Lose (Rose) Fonua
Chief Executive Officer

The First Nations Eye Health Alliance Limited



Dear Delegates, Colleagues, and Friends,

On behalf of the First Nations Eye Health Alliance (FNEHA), it is my great honour to welcome you to the 2025 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference (NATSIEHC25), taking place from 27–29 May on the beautiful lands of the Whadjuk Noongar people at The University Club of Western Australia, Perth.

This year marks a significant milestone as FNEHA proudly convenes NATSIEHC25 for the first time. Our theme, “Seeing Our Way”, reflects the growing evolution of self-determination and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in eye health and vision care. It creates a forum of “seeing through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lens” to position and strengthen our current and future state of eye healthcare sector projects and initiatives.

Our program is designed to inspire and empower. Over three days, you will engage with dynamic speakers, participate in hands-on workshops, and join in meaningful discussions that center on community-driven solutions. From the Welcome Reception and workshops on Day 1, to the Gala Dinner and Awards Night on Day 2, and culminating in full-day conference sessions on Day 3, each moment is an opportunity to connect, learn, and contribute to our shared vision.

We are especially proud to host this gathering on Whadjuk Noongar Country, acknowledging the deep cultural significance of this land and paying our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging. The artwork “Connecting Land, Sky and Water” by Dennis Golding, featured throughout the conference, beautifully encapsulates our connection to Country and the unity of our communities.

As we come together, let us be guided by our collective commitment to ending avoidable vision loss and blindness in our communities. Let this conference be a catalyst for action, a space for collaboration, and a celebration of our resilience and leadership.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we are building our vision, our way.

Warm regards,

Shaun Tatipata
Chair, First Nations Eye Health Alliance

WELCOME RECEPTION

Welcome Reception

🕒 Tuesday 12:00pm – 1:00pm

📍 Amphitheatre, Univeristy Club

Join us for the Welcome Reception at the Amphitheatre, Univeristy Club. The Middar Dance Group will perform and deliver a Welcome to Country to open the event.



Middar Dance Group

The Middar dance group has been performing for almost 50 years with a deep-seated respect and passion for their Noongar culture.

Having performed nationally and internationally, including tours of Africa, USA, Europe and Asia, they hold great pride in passing down their traditions with many children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren of past Middar members having danced with the group.



GALA DINNER AND AWARDS

Wednesday 6:30pm – 9:30pm
Novotel Perth Langley

Join us for a night of celebration, connection and culture at the NATISEHC25 Gala Dinner and Awards. Set against the backdrop of Perth's stunning cityscape, this special evening will honour outstanding contributions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health, while showcasing the strength, talent and stories of our communities.

The night begins at 6:30pm with cocktails and smooth sounds from the Red Ochre Band, followed by a powerful and interactive performance from the Binar Dance Group.

Acclaimed Aboriginal singer-songwriter Malachi will bring heartfelt music to the stage, and much-loved comedian Fabian Woods will guide us through the evening as MC, keeping the energy high and the laughs flowing. Celebrate excellence, share stories, and connect with peers and partners at this highlight of the NATISEHC25 program.

Pre dinner drinks will be available from 6.30pm and alcohol will be available for purchase with dinner from 7pm



The Red Ochre Band

The Red Ochre Band, which has been established since 1989 came about due to the need of an organisation dealing with under privileged childrens' need for tutors to teach kids music. The then tutors would stay back and jam amongst themselves and from this the band know as The Red Ochre Band was formed. Since then, the band has performed all over the state at many big festivals with many big named artists such as Troy Cassar Daley, Jimmy Little, Lee Kernaghan and Beccy Cole to name a few.

The Red Ochre Band after 31 years still has three of its original band members and over the years have had the pleasure in sharing the stage with a vast group of other young performers that have grown with the experience of performing with The Red Ochre Band.

Malachi

Malachi is a talented singer-songwriter and guitarist from WA with a deep resonating soulful voice aching with sincerity and indefinable quality of yearning. His incredible low tonal range and his classic presentation of ballads and soul hit resonate and reflect his deep connection to music. His original work is insightful and demonstrates his unique talents and his quiet dignity and powerful presentation style.

He is a proud Balardong-Yued Nyoongar man originally from the Wheatbelt town of Kellerberrin.



GALA DINNER AND AWARDS



Fabian Woods

Fabian Woods is a performer and entertainer who brings his lived experience as a proud Noongar Wongi Yamatji man in sharing tales about life, family and work. He was the 2019 Winner of Melbourne International Comedy Festival's Deadly Funny national comedy competition and has performed sell out shows at MICF and FRINGE WORLD Festival, Perth.

"Topical and clever... intelligent comedy with a purpose" Pelican Magazine, 2022

"Quintessential Aussie comedy at its best... laugh out loud funny"
★★★★½ FringeFeed, 2022

The Binar Dance Crew

The Binar Dance Crew is led by emerging Aboriginal youth through Binar Futures. Through traditional dance, they celebrate cultural identity, preserve Aboriginal heritage, and share knowledge – enhancing cultural understanding and contributing to reconciliation across the wider community.

Their commitment to cultural education extends beyond performance. Through workshops and community engagement, the Dance Crew creates meaningful opportunities for learning, connection, and empowerment. They play an important role in advancing Binar Futures' mission to engage Aboriginal youth, promote healthier lifestyles, and develop confident, culturally grounded leaders.



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Selwyn Button, Productivity Commissioner

Selwyn Button has been appointed for a 5-year term as a full-time Commissioner in June 2024. Selwyn is a Gungarri man from Southwest Queensland and an experienced leader of health, education and governance organisations across the public, private, not-for-profit and community-controlled sectors.

Prior to joining the Commission, Selwyn was a partner of PwC Indigenous Consulting (PIC), where he worked with a range of organisations to realise the commercial and community potential of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, projects and initiatives. Previously, Selwyn has been the national Registrar of the Office of the Registrar for Indigenous Corporations, the Assistant Director-General for Indigenous Education in Queensland, Chief Executive Officer of the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, and Chair of the Lowitja Institute.

Selwyn has led major policy, service delivery, governance and legislative reforms in his various leadership roles. He has also made significant contributions through his service as a board member of numerous sporting, arts, culture, health and early childhood education and care organisations.

A former primary school teacher and Queensland police officer, Selwyn holds a Bachelor of Teaching, a Master of Public Administration and a Graduate Certificate in Business Administration. He was a Wolfensohn Scholar at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and is an active member of the Harvard Club of Australia.

Selwyn co-leads the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** stream of work at the PC.



Associate Professor Hannah McGlade, Curtin Law School

Associate Professor Hannah McGlade is from the Kurin Minang people of south-west Western Australia.

She holds degrees in law and human rights, and she is currently an Associate Professor at Curtin Law School and an expert member of the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues.

Hannah's Ph.D. received the Stanner award and was published by AIATIS, 'Our Greatest challenge, Aboriginal children and human rights'. She has worked extensively as an advocate for Aboriginal people's human rights, including in health and human rights.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed, Deputy CEO First Nations Group, NDIA

Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed is a proud Narrunga Kurna woman from South Australia, based on Wurundjeri Country since 2019. Her most recent role before joining the NDIA as the Deputy CEO of First Nations was a five-year term as the CEO of Lowitja Institute – Australia's only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health research institute.

Over the past 30 years, Janine has worked in nursing, management, research, and health policy in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector. Many of these years have been spent in the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sector at state, national and international levels. This includes the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA), the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and the Congress of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM), where she was the CEO from 2013 – 2018. Janine has worked tirelessly to address racism and embed cultural safety in systems, co-authoring a recent discussion paper titled Cultural safety in Australia.

Janine has served as a Board director on many boards, including establishing and serving as Director at the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Practitioner Association, which earned her a Lifetime Achievement award for her service and achievements. Janine received the 2017 ACT NAIDOC Award, an Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity Fellowship in 2019, and a Doctor of Nursing honoris causa from Edith Cowan University in January 2020.

In 2021, Janine was awarded a Distinguished Fellowship by The George Institute for Global Health Australia and is currently the 2024 Australian of the Year for Victoria. She has been a regular spokesperson on critical topics such as research, cultural safety, the social and cultural determinants of health, climate and health, workforce and Indigenous data governance and sovereignty.

JILPIA NAPPALIARI JONES ORATION

Anne-Marie Banfield

Anne-Marie is a proud Kurna woman from South Australia who has been living, working, and raising her family on Gunditjmara country in the Southwest of Victoria for the past 30 years.

Anne-Marie is a recognised and respected member of her community and has built strong, positive relationships with both local and national Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) across Australia, having worked at a national level for the past 15 years.

Anne-Marie is the founder of Kadajiny (meaning: Thinking, Listening, Learning), an Aboriginal instructional and graphic design business specializing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning and education resources and materials.



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Anthony (Tonji) Hansen

Anthony (Tonji) Hansen was born in Katanning and in the 1970's forcibly removed from his mother and grandparent's care as a toddler. He has worked within the Government sector for the last 30 years, working in the field as a member of the Western Australia Police Department, the Department for Child Protection and the Department of Human Services. With this depth of experience has come a deep understanding of the complex needs of Stolen Generations people and their families and the complexity of these needs.

Anthony also is a hard-working member of the Bringing Them Home Committee and the Carrolup Elders Reference Group. He is a Working Party Member for the South West Boojarah Group of the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. Tonji currently works with Communicare and sees gains in the current and future investments made by mainstream Australia in compensating Aboriginal people for the wrongs inflicted in the past and continuing now as achievable only if services are directed by strengthened Aboriginal communities – our problems – our solutions*.

AGENDA | DAY ONE | TUESDAY 27 MAY

DAY 1 - TUESDAY 27 MAY 2025 FIRST NATIONS DELEGATES ONLY

DAY 1 - TUESDAY 27 MAY 2025 NON-FIRST NATIONS DELEGATES

Conference Registration Univeristy Club Foyer

8:20 - 8:50 Conference Registration

8:20 - 8:50 Conference Registration

10:00 - 11:30 First Nations Ceremony

12:00 - 1:00

Welcome Reception (all delegates)

Ampitheatre

MC Lose Fonua

Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremony and Cultural Performance *Middar Dance Group*

1:00 - 2:00

Lunch (all delegates)

2:00 - 3:30 First Nations Workshop, **FNEHA**

Banquet Hall National Plan Round Tables

2:00 - 3:30 Non-First Nations Workshop, **FNEHA**

Banquet Hall National Plan Round Tables

2:00- 3:30 Tino Rangatiratanga: A Māori Vision of Eye Health workshop - Māori delegates only
Seminar Room 3

3:30 - 4:00

Afternoon Tea (all delegates)

4:00 - 5:00 First Nations Workshop Continued
National Plan Round Tables

4:00-5:00 Non-First Nations Workshop continued
National Plan Round Tables

4:00 - 5:00 Tino Rangatiratanga: A Māori Vision of Eye Health workshop - Māori delegates only **Renata Watene**
Seminar Room 1 **and Nicola Anstice**

Conference Registration Univeristy Club Foyer

8:30 - 9:00 Conference Registration

Opening Plenary | Theme: First Nations Led Community Solutions, Being a Catalyst for Change

Banquet Hall **MC Jaki Adams**
 9:00 - 10:00
 1. Conference Opening *Jaki Adams*
 2. Pat Anderson AO, First Nations Eye Health Alliance Co Patron
 3. Q&A, *FNEHA Board*
 4. Jessica Curnuck, Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA)

10:00 - 10:30 Morning Tea

Plenary Two | Theme: National and International Perspectives on Eye Care (all delegates)

Banquet Hall **MC Kris Rallah-Baker**
 10.30-11.10 **Keynote Presentation** Commissioner Selwyn Button, Productivity Commission
 11.10-12.00 **Plenary Session**
 1. Effective refractive error coverage (eREC) in NSW Australia: the Australian Eye and Ear Health Survey *Lisa Keays and Alemka Davis*
 2. An International perspective on Indigenous Peoples Eye Care *Jaki Adams and Renata Watene*

**KEYNOTE
SPEAKER**

Lunch (all delegates)

Banquet Hall **MC Telaine Cowdrey**
 1:00-1.40pm **Keynote Presentation** Associate Professor Hannah McGlade, Curtin University
 1:45 - 3.00pm **Table Tops full details page 16-23 MC Nick Wilson**

**KEYNOTE
SPEAKER**

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>1. The Value of Sight: measuring the social return on investment of cataract surgery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Patients <i>India Bailey</i></p> <p>2. Bullinah Eye Clinic <i>Courtney Garbutt Smith</i></p> <p>3. Codesigning resources for First Nations People living with blindness and low vision in Central Australia <i>Melissa Shand and Helen Brown</i></p> <p>4. Enhancing eye health through the 715 Health Check: New resources from Eyecare Now, Eyecare Always <i>Lesley Martin, Carol Wynne</i></p> <p>5. Collaborative Eye Care Model at Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service: AHP, UWA Optometry, Ophthalmology <i>Nadia Rind, Steve Bartnik, Sinead Denny, Rosedie Milne, Wilfred Tang</i></p> | <p>6. Strengthening diabetes eye health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Tasmanian Karadi & Diabetes Australia (KeepSight) <i>Emma Robertson, Maree Marney and Marc Hicks</i></p> <p>7. OOXii Vision Kit: a new way to provide glasses to mob on country <i>Dr Riley Court Bennett; Dr Sarah Crowe</i></p> <p>8. Learnings from RANZCO's Reconciliation Action Plan <i>Presenters: A/Prof Kristopher Rallah-Baker, Ms Legend Lee, Ms Laura Ferreira and Ms Fiona Devine</i></p> <p>9. Yarning about localising eye health promotion campaigns using digital design tools. <i>Makkaillah Ridgeway and Tori Kerr.</i></p> | <p>10. Community Education and Prevention in Aboriginal Environmental Health: Working Together for Better Outcomes in South Australia <i>Jacinda Amos and Phillip Graham</i></p> <p>11. Using the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet to access First Nations Eye Health Resources <i>Bep Uink</i></p> <p>12. Regional Eye Health Coordinator Experiences <i>Michelle Hodges</i></p> <p>13. Enhancing Eye Care Access for Aboriginal Communities through the ACO Eyecare Network <i>Dr Josephine Li</i></p> <p>14. From Corridor Requests to Collective Strength: Capturing Colonial Load <i>Sara Carrison and Place for Mob team</i></p> |
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3:00 - 3:30 Afternoon Tea (all delegates)

Plenary Three | Theme: Eye Care Now and Into the Future (all delegates)

Banquet Hall **MC Sarah Carrison**
 3:30 - 4:00 **Plenary Session**
 1. Eye Care workforce now and into the future *Nicole Turner Indigenous Allied Health Australia*
 2. Perth Eye Foundation *Neilsen De Souza*

4.00-5.00pm Concurrent Sessions | Stream 1: Leadership and positioning for success

Seminar Room 3 **MC Nick Wilson**

- 1 Snapshot: where are we up to? Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health in 2025
Shaun Tatipata; Mitchell Anjou
- 2 Strengthening the Sector: NACCHO's Eye Health Training Modules *Monica Barolits-McCabe*
- 3 Optometry Australia

Concurrent Sessions | Stream 2: Empowering our people

Seminar Room 1 **MC Tanya Mcleod**

- 1 All Eyes on Walgett, Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service
Jenny Hunt
- 2 Eye Health Needs of Aboriginal Children
Colina Waddell
- 3 Our vision for vision- Western NSW Strategic Outcomes Roadmap in action (moved as unable to attend the other day) Rural Doctors Network
Jessica Rae, Chloe Mulholland, Kieran Stewart, Angela Frail

Concurrent Sessions | Stream 3: Promoting Integrated Health Solutions

Seminar Room 4 **MC Kerry Woods**

- 1 Eye Can See Clearly Now: Has Australia eliminated trachoma as a public health problem?
Kirby Institute
Carleigh Cowling, Alison Jaworski
- 2 Trachoma health promotion - what's next?
Indigenous Eye Health Unit
Lesley Martin
- 3 Taking health into the home - seeing our way for trachoma and other disease prevention
WA Health Department
Matthew Lester, Robert Mullane

6:30 - 10.00 pm Gala Dinner and Awards | Novotel Perth Langley

Please note that this is a ticketed event. If you are unsure if your registration has a Gala dinner ticket, please contact the conference team.

Address: 221 Adelaide Terrace, 6000 PERTH, Australia

Telephone: +61 8 9221 1200

Contact email: h1764@accor.com

Conference Registration Univeristy Club Foyer

8:30 - 9:00 Conference Registration

Plenary Four | Theme: Bridging now to next

Banquet Hall **MC Lauren Carr**

9:00 - 9.30 **Keynote:** Anthony Hanson

9:35 -9.55 **Jilpa Nappaljari Jones Memorial Oration** Anne-Marie Banfield

**KEYNOTE
SPEAKER**

10:00 - 10:30

Morning Tea

10:30 - 12:00

Workshops

Seminar Room 1 Cultural Safety
Jessica Curnuck Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA)

Seminar Room 3 *Workshop CANX. Speakers no longer able to attend.*

School of Optometry Eye Care 101
Sara Carrison, First Nations Eye Health Alliance and Shaun Tatipata, Deadly Vision Centre

Seminar Room 4 Clinical translation of AI assisted diabetic retinopathy screening
Angus Turner, Kerry Woods, Janet Richardson, Emma Douglas, Jocelyn Drinkwater. Lions Outback Vision

12:00 - 1:00

Lunch (all delegates)

Banquet Hall **MC Thomas Mylne**

1:00 - 1:35 **Keynote Speaker** Adjunct Professor Janine Mohamed

**KEYNOTE
SPEAKER**

1:30 - 2:30

Concurrent Sessions | Stream 1: Leadership and Positioning for Success

Seminar Room 3 **MC Doseena Fergie**

Allyship, Social Justice and Truth-Telling: The Next Steps
Lowitja Institute and First Nations Eye Health Alliance, Fred Hollows Foundation
Jaki Adams & Telaine Cowdrey

Framing change: supporting transition of eye health to First Nations leadership
Indigenous Eye Health Unit
Shaun Tatipata and Mitchell Anjou

Integrating Optometry Services within Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations: The Journey So Far, University of Western Australia
Eric Dalgety, Wilfred Tang, Sarah Haynes, Nadia Rind, Nakita Little, Paul Clarke and Neilsen de Souza

1:30 - 2:30

Concurrent Sessions | Stream 2: Empowering Our People

Seminar Room 1 **MC Jessica Curnuck**

Enhancing Ophthalmology Training through First Nations Placements: The Victorian Aboriginal Health Service and the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital Initiatives

RVEEH

Thomas Mylne and Hannah Wood

Strengthening cultural safety and responsiveness in the optometry workforce: the role of accreditation

Renata Watene and Kelley Baldwin

Communicating the Role of the Aboriginal Eye Health Practitioner and the Patient Pathway

RVEEH

Natalie Tieri, Zoe Hallwright

1:30 - 2:30

Concurrent Sessions | Stream 3: Promoting Integrated Health Solutions

Seminar Room 4 **MC Sara Carrison**

Process Evaluation: Reflections on Strong Eye's, Strong Communities

Vision 2020 Australia

Carly Isles

Equitable access to spectacles among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – OA

2025 revised principles

Optometry Australia

Nicola Anstice & Sarah Davies

Government and Policy

Fred Hollows Foundation

Madison Cassady

2:30 - 3:00

Afternoon Tea

Closing Session | Theme: Seeing our Way: Healing Now Then and Always

3:00-4.00

MC Lose Fonua

1. Seeing our Way: history, culture and family

FNEHA

2. Conference Reflections and Key Actions

Doseena Fergie, Tania Morris and Renata Watene

3. Conference Wrap up and next year

Shaun Tatipata

TABLE TOPS | THEME : CARE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

The Value of Sight: measuring the social return on investment of cataract surgery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Patients

Presenter/Author: *India Bailey*

A lot is known about cataracts in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population:

- The prevalence of visually significant cataract in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults aged 40 and above is three times that of non-Indigenous adults.
- Treatment is available – surgery takes less than 30 minutes and is one of the most frequently performed elective surgeries in Australia.
- Genuine access to cataract surgery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is compromised for myriad reasons (e.g. the University of Melbourne's Indigenous Eye Health Unit's work on the 'leaky pipe' and resultant patient attrition).

What we all know intuitively, but isn't yet documented in the literature, is the value that stands to be gained from improving eye health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through increased access to treatment, in real economic terms. Documenting this value is important for advocacy: fundholders want to know what they're getting out of their investment.

For the final semester of my Master of Public Health, I dedicated my research project to figuring out the best way one might go about documenting the value of an increased cataract surgical coverage rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations. I'd like to share some of my findings on social return on investment methodology as a means of accurately and ethically measuring value in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Bullinah Eye Clinic

Presenter/Author: *Courtney Garbutt Smith*

At Bullinah Aboriginal Health Service, we believe that access to culturally safe, comprehensive eye care is essential to closing the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes. Our monthly Optometry Clinic—delivered in partnership with the Brien Holden Foundation and visiting optometrists from Specsavers (David, Nathan, and Ella)—has become a vital service for our community.

Following my attendance at the 2024 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference in Hobart, I returned home inspired and motivated to explore how we could expand our efforts. This year, I have had the privilege of co-leading several initiatives that strengthen our eye health services through integrated and community-focused approaches.

Notably, we have introduced two Diabetes Management Days at both our main and outreach clinics, bringing together eye care with broader chronic disease support. These events are delivered in collaboration with our in-house pharmacist and involve our optometry team alongside other specialist services. Recognising the importance of early intervention, we have also initiated a Children's Vision Screening Program at our outreach clinic in Wardell Pod Village—a community still recovering from the devastation of the 2022 floods. This effort is conducted in coordination with our paediatric and hearing clinics, ensuring holistic care for children affected by trauma and displacement.

This tabletop presentation will showcase our community-led, multidisciplinary approach to eye health, share key learnings, and highlight the impact of collaboration, cultural safety, and continued inspiration from the wider NATSIEHC community. We hope to contribute meaningfully to the conversation on how local innovation can drive improved outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health.

TABLE TOPS | THEME : CARE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

Codesigning resources for First Nations People living with blindness and low vision in Central Australia

Presenter: Melissa Shand and Helen Brown

Authors: Helen Brown, Liz Duuz, Ellie Hudson and Amelia Ukovik

In 2021 Vision Australia, in collaboration with Congress, began working to support access to low vision and blindness services for First Nations People of Central Australia. We soon learned that we needed to work alongside people with lived experience to deeply understand the local needs and ways in order to share information about our service that is meaningful and culturally appropriate. Working together we identified three strategies to convey our work in ways that local people wanted.

These are:

1. Commissioning Curtis Haines, Central Australian Aboriginal artist to visually explain the service.
2. Three animations: Signs of vision loss; Caring for someone with vision loss and; Living with vision loss. These are available in English, Arrernte, Pintupi, Pitjantjara and Walpiri.
3. Vision Loss referral poster for health workers.

Developing these with and for First Nations People of Central Australia has resulted in resources that meaningfully convey information in a way that is understood and is in their own language. We are now working toward embedding the use of these resources into the way we work with people who are blind or have low vision to improve their lives and their connection to family, culture and community.

Enhancing eye health through the 715 Health Check: New resources from Eyecare Now, Eyecare Always

Presenters: Lesley Martin, Carol Wynne

Authors: Lesley Martin, Carol Wynne and Mitchell Anjou

The Eyecare Now, Eyecare Always (ENEA) resources promote regular eye checks to improve early detection and prevention of vision loss among First Nations people. Since ENEA's launch in 2022, a new resource, Your Eyes and 715 Health Check, has been developed to encourage the inclusion of a routine eye check as a key part of the 715 Health Check, aligned with the National Guide to a Preventive Health Assessment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

Developed in collaboration with Aboriginal Health Workers, community members, and primary care providers, this resource outlines the key components of a basic eye check: vision testing, external eye assessment, and referral pathways. It builds awareness of the four key eye conditions affecting First Nations people, including, cataract, refractive error, diabetic retinopathy, and trachoma, while encouraging regular eye checks, early detection and timely referrals.

Like all Minum Barreng: Indigenous Eye Health Unit resources, Your Eyes and 715 Health Check provides a foundation for community organisations to adapt and develop local materials that reflect their specific needs and priorities.

This presentation will introduce the new resource and provide practical strategies for including eye checks within 715 Health Checks, empowering communities to lead in improving eye health outcomes.



TABLE TOPS | THEME : CARE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

Collaborative Eye Care Model at Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service: AHP, UWA Optometry, Ophthalmology

Authors/Presenters: Nadia Rind, Steve Bartnik, Sinead Denny, Rosedie Milne, Wilfred Tang

This presentation highlights the efficiency and effectiveness of a comprehensive eye care model implemented at Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service in collaboration with The University of Western Australia and Lions Outback Vision (a non-profit organisation under Lions Eye Institute). The model, established in 2025, integrates the expertise of Aboriginal Health Practitioners, optometrists, and ophthalmologists to deliver holistic eye care services in an Aboriginal Medical service. Presenters will discuss the roles and contributions of each party within this collaborative framework. They will demonstrate how this integrated approach can serve as a blueprint for other health services aiming to optimise their eye care delivery. This model of 'Aboriginal Eyecare in Aboriginal Hands' starts with clinical yarning, then a series of pre-testing, consult and follow up appointments and communicating with medical and allied health practitioners. The culturally responsive service currently runs one day per week in East Perth, with the intention of expanding to two days per week in the steady state. The presentation will also cover the impact of this model on patient attendance rates and reducing wait times for service deliveries, showcasing its potential to improve visual outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.



TABLE TOPS | THEME : CARE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

Strengthening diabetes eye health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Tasmanian Karadi & Diabetes Australia (KeepSight)

Presenters: Emma Robertson, Maree Marney and Marc Hicks

Authors: Karadi Aboriginal Corporation & Keepsight

Karadi Aboriginal Corporation is committed to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Tasmania. Through a strategic partnership with Diabetes Australia and the KeepSight initiative, Karadi has implemented a local eye health promotion pilot aimed at increasing diabetes eye checks within the community. This initiative aligns with the conference theme, "Seeing Our Way," by fostering self-determination and strengthening Aboriginal-led healthcare solutions.

KeepSight is Diabetes Australia's national diabetes eye check reminder program, delivered in partnership with the Australian eye sector. The joint pilot consists of both inreach and outreach activities designed to improve access to diabetes eye checks. The inreach model brings optometry services directly to Karadi's community clinic, providing a culturally safe space for eye health assessments. During these visits, the optometrist educates patients on KeepSight and offers them the opportunity to register, reinforcing ongoing eye care management. As an incentive, community members receive a KeepSight-branded t-shirt and glasses cleaning cloth.

The outreach model extends support beyond the clinic, with Karadi staff assisting community members in attending optometry appointments, ensuring accessibility for those who may face barriers such as transport limitations. These efforts help to strengthen engagement and participation in preventive eye health measures. A key component of the initiative is its evaluation framework, tracking the number of diabetes eye checks conducted before and during the pilot, as well as monitoring KeepSight registrations. A qualitative survey will capture changes in health literacy and community perceptions, providing valuable insights into the program's effectiveness. Early results indicate a positive impact, with new cases of diabetic retinopathy identified and high engagement with KeepSight. For Karadi, KeepSight is proving a good referral pathway to their services which includes other health services and community support.

KeepSight has played a crucial role in this initiative by providing a national recall and reminder system for people with diabetes, ensuring they stay on track with regular eye checks. Partnering with KeepSight has allowed Karadi to integrate this proven system into their community-driven approach, offering long-term benefits such as increased early detection, improved diabetes and eye health literacy, and better management of diabetes-related eye conditions. The partnership has also strengthened referral pathways, connecting community members with broader healthcare services by Karadi and ensuring sustained engagement in eye care.

By prioritising culturally responsive care and community-driven solutions, this pilot showcases the potential of integrated health initiatives to address preventable vision loss. Karadi's experience provides a model for expanding self-determined eye health initiatives across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, ensuring a stronger, brighter future for eye health.

The pilot ran for six months, commencing in October 2024 and finishing in February 2025. This presentation will share insights and learnings as well as evaluation outcomes and results.



TABLE TOPS | THEME : CARE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

OOXii Vision Kit: a new way to provide glasses to mob on country

Authors/Presenters: Dr Riley Court Bennett; Dr Sarah Crowe

Uncorrected refractive error (URE) is a major cause of avoidable visual impairment in Indigenous communities. This is partly because fly-in fly-out optometry services are not able to reach all the people in need. Staying on country is very important to many Indigenous Australians, and travelling to regional centres for eye health checks may not always be possible or desirable.

Ideally all Australians should have access to full eye health care and we should all work toward that goal. In the meantime, however, people in remote communities should be able to access glasses to improve their vision. The OOXii Vision Kit has been developed to help address this need. It contains everything an Aboriginal Health Worker needs to test visual acuity, measure refractive error and dispense customised affordable glasses on the spot. The kit is portable and affordable, with step-by-step instructions provided via a mobile app. Vision and refractive error data can be relayed to eye health professionals online to audit results and provide quality control. We would like to provide a hands-on opportunity for Indigenous eye care providers to examine and try the OOXii Vision Kit and provide feedback its applicability in their communities.

Learnings from RANZCO's Reconciliation Action Plan

Presenters: A/Prof Kristopher Rallah-Baker, Ms Legend Lee, Ms Laura Ferreira and Ms Fiona Devine

Authors: RANZCO Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Committee

The Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) framework commits the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) to activities that seek to achieve equity in access and health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The current RANZCO RAP commenced in December 2023 and aims to continue building collaborative partnerships with First Nations peoples and the health sector in recognition of self-determination and First Nations leadership in shaping eye health solutions.

The aim of this presentation is threefold: firstly, to highlight how RANZCO's RAP has encouraged and facilitated the growth and retention of the First Nations ophthalmology workforce - via scholarships, selection initiatives and mentorship; secondly to outline how RANZCO aims to improve and enhance cultural safety practices by detailing the progress made in RANZCO's cultural safety pilot programs and; thirdly, to promote RANZCO's advocacy efforts in reconciliation by making it more visible to the government and the public.



TABLE TOPS | THEME : CARE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

Yarning about localising eye health promotion campaigns using digital design tools

Authors/Presenters: Makkaillah Ridgeway and Tori Kerr.

Minum Barreng: Indigenous Eye Health Unit (MB:IEHU) has worked with First Nations communities for over 15 years to develop national eye health promotion campaigns including 'Clean Faces, Strong Eyes', 'Check Today, See Tomorrow', and 'Eyecare Now, Eyecare Always'. Throughout this journey and through our supporting role, we have learned that when self-determination and community voices are at the centre, and when it is grounded in 'seeing our way', eye health outcomes for First Nations Peoples improve.

In this tabletop presentation, we want to yarn about how digital tools like Canva can support communities to adapt and share eye health messages in ways that reflect local strengths, needs and priorities. We'd love to yarn about what eye health resources you're using and what works best in your community - like posters, videos, or social media. We're also interested in hearing what tools you're already using (like Canva), how confident you feel using them, and what kind of support or training would help you develop localised eye health promotion using elements from the existing campaigns.

Community Education and Prevention in Aboriginal Environmental Health: Working Together for Better Outcomes in South Australia

Authors/Presenters: Jacinda Amos and Phillip Graham

Health and wellbeing in Aboriginal communities are deeply influenced by environmental conditions, access to services, and culturally relevant education. In South Australia, the Aboriginal Environmental Health team takes a holistic approach to supporting community health through both education and practical, on-the-ground work. A central focus is community education and disease prevention. School visits across regional and remote areas deliver engaging, age-appropriate hygiene education using the "No Germs on Me" program—empowering children to understand the importance of clean faces and hands in preventing Trachoma and other infections. Children become strong messengers for health in their homes and schools. Beyond the classroom, the team supports community wellbeing events like the "Stronger Together" day, connecting families with health services, resources, and culturally safe spaces for sharing knowledge and celebrating community strength.

The program goes further than education by addressing the environmental factors that contribute to poor health. This includes practical support through:

- Pest control services to reduce disease-carrying insects and vermin
- A dedicated Dog & Cat Health Program to manage animal populations and improve animal health.
- Advocacy for community members experiencing issues with housing conditions—supporting them to navigate systems and seek repairs or improvements to their living environment

At every level, the work is community-led and strengths-based, providing people with the tools, information, and direct support they need to achieve better health outcomes. The program recognises that prevention is not just about knowledge—it's about creating environments where people can thrive.

Together, through education, advocacy, and practical support, this work is helping to build healthier homes, stronger communities, and a brighter future for Aboriginal people across South Australia.

TABLE TOPS | THEME : CARE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

Using the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet to access First Nations Eye Health Resources

Authors/Presenters: Bep Uink

The Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet (AIH) is a national web resource that provides relevant and culturally appropriate content and resources for health practitioners and community members working to enhance health outcomes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The AIH database currently holds over 250 publications, resources, programs and policy frameworks about First Nations eye health. The workshop aims to raise awareness and skills on using the AIH database to find First Nations-led eye health information to support practitioners on their journey toward culturally safe health practice. The workshop will lead participants through tips for searching the wealth of eye health resources available on the AIH website. A second component of the workshop will be discussing the underlying importance of self-determination in First Nations eye health solutions. Reflecting on her own experiences in Aboriginal youth mental health research, and as the first Aboriginal Director of the AIH, Prof Uink will detail the approach that AIH is taking toward ensuring that the information and practices of the AIH are centred in First Nations worldviews and how AIH can support the health sector to achieve the Four Priority Reforms of the National Closing the Gap Agreement.

Regional Eye Health Coordinator Experiences

Authors/Presenters: Michelle Hodges

The Fred Hollows Foundation partners with CheckUP to manage the Regional Eye Health Workforce Project which supports the Palm Island Community Company and Gidgee Healing to employ a Regional Eye Health Coordinator (REHC) role within their own Community Controlled Health Services. The role employs a local and suitably qualified Indigenous person whose local and professional knowledge and relationships strengthen community engagement in services across the eye care continuum. The REHC provides vital preparation and follow up to patients alongside visiting optometry or specialist appointments. These roles enable and collect data on:

- the integration of eye examinations as part of 715 health checks
- promotion of and supporting access to annual diabetes eye tests
- recalls
- referrals onto ophthalmologists
- post-operative care.

We offer an interview with REHCs Jeriah Coutts from Palm Island Community Company; Garney Naylor and Nicole Byrne from Gidgee Healing having these staff share their perspectives on what they believe is important and valuable in the delivery of culturally responsive eye care. The interview aims to privilege the voices and experiences of First Nations professionals of the eye care sector.



TABLE TOPS | THEME : CARE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

Enhancing Eye Care Access for Aboriginal Communities through the ACO Eyecare Network

Authors/Presenters: Dr Josephine Li

The Australian College of Optometry (ACO) has been a committed supporter for improving the eye care of First Nations communities for over four decades. With a strong focus on equity, the ACO has built lasting partnerships through ongoing community engagement, a dedicated optometry network, targeted advocacy and support from the Victorian State Government. These collaborations have enabled the delivery of quality eye care services and subsidised visual aids for Aboriginal people.

Through Victorian Eyecare Services (VES) and Victorian Aboriginal Spectacle Subsidy Scheme (VASSS), the ACO has worked alongside communities across the state to support and co-design models of care. The current eye care model encourages the ACO team to support self-determined, community-led models of care across Victoria. The dynamic and adaptive nature of our ACO clinic network plays a key role in extending service reach and addressing disparity in eye care access.

This tabletop presentation will share insights into the ACO's eye care concepts, enablers, barriers and challenges in delivering eye care and VASSS in a way that is with the community and for the community.

From Corridor Requests to Collective Strength: Capturing Colonial Load

Authors/Presenters: Sara Garrison and Place for Mob team

Discussing the benefits of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collective at Flinders University's College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Through a formal request system and regular meetings, the Collective helps capture and reduce colonial load, set boundaries, strengthen relationships, and provide mutual support.



1.

A Vision for Change, a pathway for eye health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Lose Fonua

This presentation shares the outcomes of the 2024 First Nations Workshop led by the First Nations Eye Health Alliance (FNEHA) mob focused consultation, held as part of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference (NATSIEHC) 2024 shaping a community-led vision for the next National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Plan. Grounded in self-determination, the session amplified the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in identifying key priorities and strategies for equity in eye health.

This presentation will delve into the community-directed themes that emerged, focusing on the need for culturally grounded consultation methods and shared decision-making models, reaffirming the importance of being not only heard—but also resourced and counted. The talk will speak about the enduring struggle for recognition within mainstream health frameworks, and the systemic barriers that hinder progress. It will also discuss metrics of success as envisioned by community voices and present a pathway for continued engagement through the First Nations Eye Health Alliance. The findings highlight the power of mob-led dialogue in shifting policy, practice, and accountability towards true equity in eye health for First Nations communities.

2.

NACCHO - Strengthening the Sector: NACCHO's Eye Health Training Modules

Monica Barolits-McCabe

NACCHO has developed a series of culturally safe Eye Health Training Modules to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce and strengthen eye care delivery across the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector.

This presentation introduces the training suite, developed with community input to embed eye health within holistic, culturally appropriate primary care. Monica will share insights from implementation across the ACCHO network, and discuss how the modules are building workforce capability, supporting self-determination, and contributing to improved vision outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

3.

Snapshot: where are we up to? Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health in 2025

Shaun Tatipata and Mitchell Anjou

Success in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health will be First Nations and ACCHO led and controlled where the right eye care is provided in the right place at the right time by the right workforce. This will include a national plan and strong leadership, where mob working in the space are supported, where there are good and effective pathways into the workforce, where progress is monitored and evaluated, and evidence is collected and shared for even better outcomes.

This presentation will provide an overview of where the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health and care currently sits using publicly available data and our knowledge of and experience in the sector. We will report evidence of progress over the past fifteen years and provide an assessment of success to close the gap for refractive error, cataract, diabetes eye care and trachoma, systems reform, First Nations leadership in eye care, workforce, cultural safety and allyship.

1.

Our vision for vision- Western NSW Strategic Outcomes Roadmap in action

Presenters: Jessica Rae, Chloe Mulholland, Kieran Stewart, Angela Frail

It became evident to Western NSW eye health partnership (WNSWEHP) stakeholders that an evidence-based monitoring and evaluation plan with clear, tangible, and measurable goals would be required to inform the direction of the partnership and assess ongoing impact. The Strategic Outcomes Roadmap was developed by the partners and facilitated by consultants using an iterative process to refine the Roadmap. The Roadmap was developed with sustainability in mind. By restructuring eye health service delivery models from reactive to proactive, the WNSWEHP aims to have a lasting impact on the way that eye care is delivered in Western NSW. The Roadmap was developed in a way that allows continual adaptation to suit the needs of communities over time.

This presentation will elaborate on the staged implementation of the now completed Roadmap and how this will be facilitated by staff of the Wellington Aboriginal Cultural Health Service (WACHS) a key stakeholder in the WNSWEHP. Finally, we will explain what the Roadmap means for the presenters as Aboriginal community members as well as eye health clinicians and advocates. This is “Our vision for vision- WNSWEHP Strategic Outcomes Roadmap in action”.

2.

Eye Health Needs of Aboriginal Children

Presenters: Colina Waddell

The Brien Holden Foundation (BHF) has been providing optometry services to communities across NSW since December 1999 in partnership with the AH&MRC of NSW, with a focus on improving access to quality eye care to Aboriginal communities. Over the past decade, the program has grown significantly to address the eye health needs of school-aged children. Recognising that good vision is critical to learning and development, BHF now provides comprehensive eye examinations directly within schools, ensuring students are assessed in a familiar and culturally safe environment.

The program includes the supply of prescription glasses to students, removing a major barrier to learning. BHF works collaboratively with Aboriginal Education Officers, school staff, Learning and Support Teachers, Aboriginal Attendance and Support Officers, Aboriginal health workers/practitioners, Wellbeing and Health In-reach Nurse Coordinators, etc, to coordinate clinics and follow-up care, ensuring continuity of culturally appropriate services. BHF provides regular optometry services to 30 schools across NSW. These school clinics are an essential component of BHF's commitment to equitable eye health and improving educational outcomes. By addressing vision problems early, BHF helps children participate fully in their learning, giving them the best possible chance to succeed both inside and outside the classroom.



3.

All Eyes on Walgett

Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service

Presenter: Jenny Hunt

Yaama, A bit of background around the Eye health program at Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service (WAMS). The first ever Brien Holden Foundation clinic in Walgett was held in December 1999, since then WAMS and Brien Holden Foundation have continued to work in partnership. The Eye Health Program footprint covers areas as far as Goodooga, Pilliga, Wee Waa, Narrabri and the entire shire of Walgett which includes the towns of Lightning Ridge and Collarenebri. WAMS is fortunate to have a visiting Optometrist that visits monthly from Sydney to Walgett to provide Optometric care.

The Eye Health team at WAMS provides transport for those who require eye surgery and Ophthalmology care (which is usually 3-4 hours away). They also provide follow up care for clients with chronic eye conditions for those requiring ongoing treatment and management. The eye health team works in conjunction with other programs to deliver eye health screening, eye health awareness and education to local and surrounding schools.

This presentation will tell the story of eye health in Walgett and its surrounding regions from Jenny Hunt, one of New South Wales most successful and long-standing Aboriginal Eye Health Workers in history. This is “All eyes on Walgett”.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS | STREAM 3 : PROMOTING INTEGRATED HEALTH SOLUTIONS | SEMINAR ROOM 4

1.

Eye Can See Clearly Now: Has Australia eliminated trachoma as a public health problem?

Presenters: Carleigh Cowling and Alison Jaworski

Authors: Carleigh Cowling, Alison Jaworski, Absar Noorul, Sergio Sandler, Susana Vaz Nery, John Kaldor, on behalf of the National Trachoma Surveillance and Control Reference Group

Australia has been the only high-income country with endemic trachoma, the world's leading infectious cause of preventable blindness. In 2022 overall trachoma and trichiasis prevalence reached World Health Organization (WHO) thresholds for elimination as a public health problem (EPHP). 2024 was the final year of monitoring against these thresholds, before being eligible to apply for EPHP validation.

WHO grading criteria was used to classify trachoma in Aboriginal children aged 5–9 years by trained graders. Trichiasis rates are derived from public health surveillance, visiting optometry services, and Adult Health assessments (715 checks).



2.

Trachoma health promotion - What's Next?*Presenters: Lesley Martin Indigenous Eye Health Unit*

Aboriginal leadership, community connections, knowledge and ways of knowing are having results in trachoma health promotion. Trachoma health promotion and efforts to eliminate this preventable eye infection are coming to an interesting crossroads. Australia is preparing to submit a dossier to the World Health Organisation for the certification of the elimination of trachoma as a public health problem in 2025. The approaches to health promotion and public health management of trachoma are likely to significantly change over the next few years. This presentation will explore the current state of health promotion and the ways it is evolving to be Aboriginal led and sustainable into the future.

Milpa the goanna is the mascot for the 'Clean Faces, Strong Eyes', trachoma health promotion campaign which has been promoted since 2010. The current key hygiene actions called Milpa's Six Steps to Stop Germs were developed with Aboriginal community partners and community voice to include a broader range of critical actions to help reduce trachoma and other childhood infections. An evaluation of trachoma elimination health promotion was completed in 2024 and provides insight to activities and resources that were effective over the years and advice about future health promotion approach and resource priorities. We will discuss the outcomes of the evaluation and share some of the transition thinking that is informing our work.

3.

Taking health into the home - seeing our way for trachoma and other disease prevention*Presenter: Matthew Lester and Robert Mullane*

The Aboriginal Environmental Health Program in WA has responsibility for providing outreach to regional and remote Aboriginal communities. Recent review and co-design with the Aboriginal community-controlled sector has identified core elements to support sustainable primordial prevention of contagious diseases.

A current focus of the program is working with people in their homes to prevent illnesses and diseases. The home is the most important environment for most people – especially children. Having functional health hardware in a home that supports the 9 Healthy Living Practices is as important as understanding how to prevent disease transfer. Whether the reason for a visit by an environmental health team is in response to a clinic-generated referral or as part of a scheduled Healthy Homes Assessment in community, the actions are quite similar in that the health hardware is reviewed, fixed if needed, and conversations can be had in the home about prevention of diseases like trachoma.

This presentation will provide information about the WA program, its work in the F and E of SAFE to sustainably prevent trachoma, the home visits offered and the work behind developing a workforce friendly App to capture assessments, housing repair referrals and health promotion.

PLENARY PRESENTATIONS 4 | THEME: FIRST NATIONS LED COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS, BEING A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

1.

Keynote *

Anthony (Tonji) Hansen was born in Katanning and in the 1970's forcibly removed from his mother and grandparent's care as a toddler. He has worked within the Government sector for the last 30 years, working in the field as a member of the Western Australia Police Department, the Department for Child Protection and the Department of Human Services. With this depth of experience has come a deep understanding of the complex needs of Stolen Generations people and their families and the complexity of these needs.

Anthony also is a hard-working member of the Bringing Them Home Committee and the Carrolup Elders Reference Group. He is a Working Party Member for the South West Boojarah Group of the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. Tonji currently works with Communicare and sees gains in the current and future investments made by mainstream Australia in compensating Aboriginal people for the wrongs inflicted in the past and continuing now as achievable only if services are directed by strengthened Aboriginal communities – our problems – our solutions.

*Please be advised that this session may contain references to trauma, grief, loss, and lived experiences relating to the Stolen Generations and the ongoing impacts of colonisation. These topics may be distressing or triggering for some audience members. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and honour those who continue to share their stories. If this content brings up difficult feelings for you, please know that support is available. You can contact 13YARN – a 24/7, free, confidential support line run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 13YARN (13 92 76) Free and available any time. For mob who are feeling overwhelmed or just want to talk. Visit 13yarn.org.au for more information.

2.

Jilpa Nappaljari Jones Memorial Oration*

Presenters: Anne Marie Banfield

The Jilpa Nappaljari Jones Memorial Oration celebrates the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to eye care. The Oration was first introduced in the 2022 Conference and acknowledges the significant contribution Jilpa made to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health and her inspiration for a whole generation of amazing women leaders in eye health. The 2025 Jilpa Nappaljari Jones Memorial Oration will be presented at the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference 2025 by Anne-Marie Banfield.

*Please note that the following session may include content that some people may find sensitive or distressing. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pay respect to those who choose to share their stories. If this content raises difficult emotions for you, support is available. You can contact 13YARN – a 24/7, free and confidential support line run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 13YARN (13 92 76) Free and available any time. For mob who are feeling overwhelmed or just need a yarn.

3.

Taking health into the home - seeing our way for trachoma and other disease prevention

Presenter: Matthew Lester and Robert Mullane

The Aboriginal Environmental Health Program in WA has responsibility for providing outreach to regional and remote Aboriginal communities. Recent review and co-design with the Aboriginal community-controlled sector has identified core elements to support sustainable primordial prevention of contagious diseases.

A current focus of the program is working with people in their homes to prevent illnesses and diseases. The home is the most important environment for most people – especially children. Having functional health hardware in a home that supports the 9 Healthy Living Practices is as important as understanding how to prevent disease transfer. Whether the reason for a visit by an environmental health team is in response to a clinic-generated referral or as part of a scheduled Healthy Homes Assessment in community, the actions are quite similar in that the health hardware is reviewed, fixed if needed, and conversations can be had in the home about prevention of diseases like trachoma.

This presentation will provide information about the WA program, its work in the F and E of SAFE to sustainably prevent trachoma, the home visits offered and the work behind developing a workforce friendly App to capture assessments, housing repair referrals and health promotion.

WORKSHOPS | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | SEMINAR ROOM 1

Clinical Yarning

Presenter: Dr Dawn Bessarab

WORKSHOPS | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | SEMINAR ROOM 1

Cultural Safety in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health

Presenter: Jessica Curnuck, Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA)

Cultural safety is about creating respectful, inclusive, and empowering health care experiences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This workshop, led by Jessica Curnuck from AHCWA, will focus on what cultural safety really means in eye health—and how it can be put into practice.

Through yarning and discussion, participants will explore:

- The difference between cultural safety and cultural awareness
- The impact of racism and colonisation on health outcomes
- How to reflect on your own role and responsibility in providing culturally safe care
- Practical steps to improve services and build stronger relationships with communities

This workshop is for anyone working in eye health—whether you're a clinician, manager, researcher, or policy-maker. Come along to learn, listen, and take away real actions to support better and more culturally safe care.

WORKSHOPS | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | SEMINAR ROOM 4

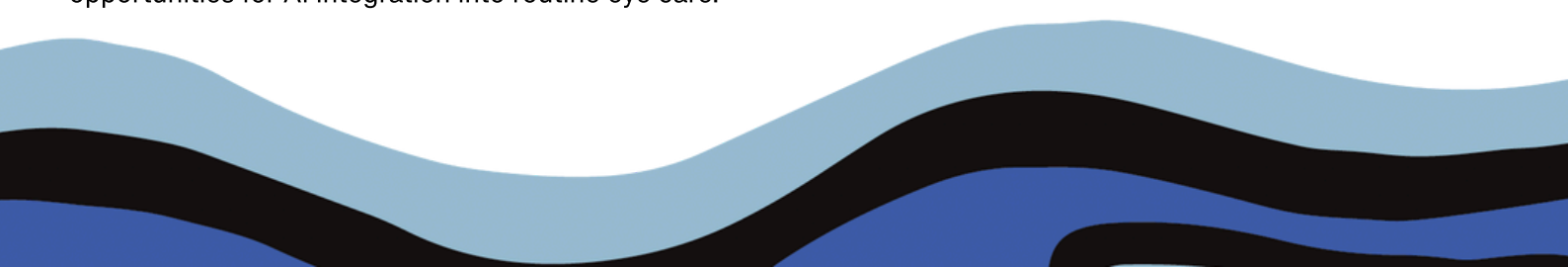
Clinical translation of AI assisted diabetic retinopathy screening

Presenter: Angus Turner, Kerry Woods, Janet Richardson, Emma Douglas, Jocelyn Drinkwater

Diabetic retinopathy (DR) is a leading cause of vision loss. Routine DR screening is cost-effective and can prevent blindness, yet screening rates in regional Western Australia remain low. Lions Outback Vision conducted a real-world comparison of three deep learning systems (DLSs) (Google ARDA, Thirona RetCAD™, and EyRIS SELENA+) for DR screening in the Pilbara. Two DLSs performed comparably to ophthalmologist grading based on 188 retinal photos from people with diabetes, maintaining accuracy for First Nations patients (70.2% of study population). Google ARDA demonstrated the highest sensitivity (100%) for referable DR and the fewest ungradable images (2.1%). Furthermore, use of artificial intelligence (AI) was acceptable to participants.

This study demonstrates that AI-assisted DR screening is feasible, culturally safe, and accurate in remote Australian settings. Before we can implement AI-assisted DR screening into routine care, it is important to explore the human-centred factors which impact its clinical utility in real-world settings. Meaningful engagement with GPs and primary health professionals will enable co-design of a user-friendly interface which supports realistic workflows and communicates with existing digital records.

In a workshop format, we invite eye health professionals to contribute to our exploration of challenges and opportunities for AI integration into routine eye care.



WORKSHOPS | CONCURRENT SESSIONS | BANQUET HALL

Eye Care 101

Presenter: Sara Carrison

This interactive workshop is designed for those involved in frontline care for our communities to build confidence and practical skills in eye care assessment. It is suitable for those seeking to enhance their understanding of the eye and ability to assess eye health, identify concerns, and navigate referral pathways effectively. We will discuss what is 'normal' in eye health to help identify abnormalities and how to ask the right questions with a client to determine the best course of management. Participants will rotate through hands-on stations to practice skills such as: measuring and recording visual acuity, taking and interpreting retinal scans, and measuring intraocular pressures. Join us to strengthen your eye care skills and improve access to quality eye health services in your community!

CONCURRENT SESSIONS | STREAM 1: LEADERSHIP AND POSITIONING FOR SUCCESS | SEMINAR ROOM 3

1.

Allyship, Social Justice and Truth-Telling: The Next Steps

Lowitja Institute and First Nations Eye Health Alliance

Presenters: Jaki Adams and Telaine Cowdrey

In the wake of the 2023 referendum, the calls for meaningful allyship, structural reform and truth telling have grown louder — not just within communities, but across our institutions, organisations and national conscience. This session will explore some of the critical shifts needed for ally organisations to move beyond symbolic gestures toward genuine accompliceship in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination. Through the lens of lived experiences, Jaki Adams and Telaine Cowdrey will reflect on the lessons of the past year and outline their thinking on the practical and political steps forward. From interrogating institutional power to rethinking partnerships, funding structures and leadership accountability, this session hopes to offer an unflinching look at what it takes to centre justice, uphold truth, and walk alongside communities with integrity.



2.

Framing change: supporting the transition of eye health to First Nations leadership IEHU

Presenters: Shaun Tatipata and Mitchell Anjou

Minum Barreng: Indigenous Eye Health Unit (MB: IEHU) is actively transitioning activities to First Nations organisations. More than a structural shift, this transition reflects a deep commitment to support self-determination, cultural safety, and community led solutions. Grounded in collaboration, cultural governance, and sustainability, the transition process is informed by principles developed at Wandha Djerring (September 2024), a cultural immersion activity designed to strengthen cultural competency and team cohesion. These principles guide accountability, knowledge transfer, and integration to help support a successful and sustainable transition.

Progress has already been made, including through the establishment of the First Nations Eye Health Alliance, the transition of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference, partnerships with NACCHO on trachoma elimination health promotion activities, and AIHW data sharing to support Indigenous data sovereignty. Ongoing efforts in system reform, health promotion and technical support will continue to reinforce First Nations leadership in eye health.

This presentation provides an opportunity to share thinking and insights into the transition processes, key challenges, and learnings. We are seeking to provide transparency around transition activities, respect the growing strength of First Nations leadership, acknowledge contributions, celebrate legacy, and reinforce an ongoing commitment to ending avoidable vision loss and blindness in First Nations communities.

3.

Integrating Optometry Services within Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations: The Journey So Far, University of Western Australia

Presenters: Eric Dalgety¹ Wilfred Tang² Sarah Haynes³ Nadia Rind⁴ Nakita Little⁵ Paul Clarke² Neilsen de Souza²

This presentation features an introduction and interactions with the audience in a Q&A format. It explores the integration of optometry services within Aboriginal Medical Services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, guided by the ethos and values of The University of Western Australia. UWA optometry program is committed to principles of cultural respect, community partnership, and excellence in clinical service delivery. Key partnerships with ACCHOs have been established to achieve common goals and outcomes. The University Departments of Rural Health and Rural Health West play critical enabling roles. UWA optometry offers comprehensive and ongoing optometry services in AMSs (GRAMS/SWAMS/DYHS), Moorditj Koort Aboriginal Corporation and in partnership with LOV (Broome). Blindness prevention is an essential objective of UWA academics working in these settings, with emphases on correcting refractive errors, and effective management of cataracts and diabetic retinopathy. Research and workforce development are integral components of the joint initiative. The journey has provided many significant milestones and opportunities, with each AMS and ACCHO presenting unique learnings that serve as references but are not directly transferrable. Stakeholder engagements have been essential to the success of this initiative, involving various organisations and individuals which contribute to the strategic directions and goals of the initiative.

1. Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service, 2 Department of Optometry and Vision Science, UWA, 3. Southwest Aboriginal Medical Service, 4. Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service, 5. Moorditj Koort Aboriginal Corporation

1.

Enhancing Ophthalmology Training through First Nations Placements: The Victorian Aboriginal Health Service and the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital Initiatives

Presenters: Thomas Mylne, Hannah Wood

Authors: Dr. Thomas Mylne, Dr. Hannah Wood, A/Prof Rosie Dawkins

This presentation explores the integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners into Victorian eye health services via two programs. One which rotates ophthalmology trainees to the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) to experience culturally safe care, alongside the successful launch of a funded First Nations Medical Student Ophthalmology placement at the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH).

We highlight the collaborative development and objectives of these placements, which aim to address eye health disparities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities while:

- providing ophthalmology trainees with an invaluable opportunity for immersive, culturally competent learning
- And
- reducing barriers for First Nations Medical Students to access an ophthalmology specialty rotation.

Through our experience, we discuss the challenges and successes of incorporating First Nations perspectives into ophthalmology training, the impact on trainees' professional development, and the importance of fostering long-term relationships between medical institutions and community-controlled health services.

The funding and establishment of the First Nations Medical Students placement at RVEEH marks a significant step in bolstering a culturally competent workforce. It aims to increase representation in eye health by ensuring that medical students gain exposure to specialist ophthalmology practice in a supported environment to foster interest and passion in this field.

Our session will provide insights into the structure, outcomes, and future potential of these initiatives, aiming to inspire similar models in other regions and disciplines. Through this collaborative approach, we aim to build a more inclusive and culturally respectful healthcare system that better serves the needs of First Nations Australians.

2.

Strengthening cultural safety and responsiveness in the optometry workforce: the role of accreditation OCANZ

Presenters: Renata Watene and Kelley Baldwin

The Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ) is committed to contributing to a health system free of racism and discrimination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori Peoples. We aim to do this through our accreditation functions and by working to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori cultural safety and responsiveness into the optometry curriculum, with the intention of producing graduates that provide culturally safe care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori Peoples through the development of cultural capabilities.

Our work also recognises the critical importance of developing a diverse and representative optometry workforce and OCANZ is committed to supporting the work that is already being led by First Nations Peoples in Australia and Aotearoa / New Zealand to increase the representation of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori Peoples in optometry and optometry education.

This presentation is an opportunity for OCANZ to share with the eye health community the work we are doing to contribute to an eye health system free of racism and discrimination for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori Peoples and to hear your thoughts on this work. We invite you to join us for an interactive tabletop discussion to facilitate knowledge sharing and connection.

3.

Communicating the Role of the Aboriginal Eye Health Practitioner and the Patient Pathway RVEEH

Presenters: Natalie Tieri and Zoe Hallwright

Authors: Gavin Brown, Natalie Tieri, Kelli McGuinness, Zoe Hallwright, Rosie Dawkins

For nearly a decade the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) and the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH) have been working in close collaboration to provide eye care that is seamlessly integrated across the Aboriginal Community Controlled and the tertiary hospital sectors. Critical to this service provision is the role of Aboriginal Eye Health Practitioner. This role has been developed with the support of the Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF).

When discussing how to document the unique training pathway for the Aboriginal Eye Health Practitioner, including describing the role and stories of patients supported, VAHS proposed that rather than a traditional text-based report a more culturally appropriate format would be the development of videos. FHF and RVEEH were immediately enthusiastic about this idea.

We are proud to present two short videos detailing the role and training of the Aboriginal Eye Health Practitioner at VAHS, and the patient pathway between VAHS and RVEEH. These videos exclusively use Aboriginal voices, and are designed for sharing with services, clinicians and patients.

We hope that you enjoy the videos, learn something, and that it starts some conversations and connections.



1.

Process Evaluation: Reflections on Strong Eye's, Strong Communities

Presenters: Carly Isles

This presentation shares the outcomes of a process evaluation of Strong Eyes, Strong Communities: A Five-Year Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health and Vision (2019–2024). Commissioned by Vision 2020 Australia and led by Yamagigu Consulting, the evaluation examined the Plan's development, stakeholder engagement, implementation strategies, and clarity and feasibility of its goals.

Grounded in Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing, the evaluation applied a strengths-based, participatory approach. It drew on interviews, yarning sessions, and document analysis to gather insights from Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, service providers, government representatives, and stakeholders across the eye health sector. Cultural safety, data sovereignty, and human-centred storytelling were central to the methodology.

The evaluation recommends that future planning should:

- Focus on a smaller set of high-impact actions;
- Centre Aboriginal leadership across all stages of development and implementation;
- Engage government agencies as core partners from the outset;
- Embed a comprehensive and logical implementation framework.

This evaluation provides an opportunity for reflection and learning, offering insights into how the eye health sector can more effectively support self-determination, strengthen partnerships, and contribute to equitable and culturally safe eye care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

2.

Equitable access to spectacles among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – OA 2025 revised principles

Presenters: Nicola Anstice and Sarah Davies

All Australia jurisdictions provide access to subsidised spectacle schemes. However, different eligibility, entitlement, product range, cost and payment criteria create barriers to participating in the scheme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples due to uncertainty amongst patients and eye care providers about what subsidised support is available. It also means access to affordable spectacles is not equitable across all regions of Australia. In May 2013 (updated June 2016), Optometry Australia (OA) published the principles for nationally consistent subsidised spectacle schemes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. These principles outlined the essential elements that should be included in subsidised spectacle schemes to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. In 2023, OA recognised these principles required revision to ensure they were contemporaneous. This initiative commenced with a workshop at the 2024 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference in nipaluna, Tasmania. Incorporating feedback from this workshop, OA has updated these principles for review by key stakeholders. This presentation provides an overview of the 2025 revised principles and recommended implementation scheme which will underpin ongoing advocacy for nationally consistent access to equitable and affordable spectacles and visual aids for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

3.

The Political Landscape: Building Our Collective Action

Presenters: Madison Cassady

In this presentation, Madison Cassady will explore the current political and policy landscape shaping health equity in Australia, with a strategic focus on embedding eye health within national and sub-national priorities. Framed around the imperative for policy change and systems reform, the session will unpack how federal and state commitments can be leveraged to advance equitable access to eye health services, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Participants will gain insight into actionable opportunities within major government strategies to integrate eye health into broader health and social policy frameworks and conclude with a collective call to action emphasising the role of data-driven advocacy, community-controlled sector leadership, and grassroots mobilisation.





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**The Fred Hollows
Foundation**

The Fred Hollows Foundation works to uphold Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' right to sight, free, prior and informed consent and self-determination. This is why we partner with community-controlled organisations to enable self-determination and locally led delivery of eye health to their communities.

HOW WE WORK & OUR PARTNERS

To ensure we work alongside the community-controlled sector and utilise our strong presence in the eye health sector to uphold these values, the IAP does not work where we are not invited to ensure community organisations and leaders are calling the shots and we do not accept Government funding to ensure we are not competing with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector for resources.



Our Indigenous Australia Program (IAP)

IAP is guided by our principles to ensure we uphold our commitment to self-determination and work with integrity.

Self-determination - free prior and informed consent

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership
- Equity
- Respect
- Working Together
- Support
- Transparency and Accountability
- Patient Centred Care



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Partnering for Health Equity: Our Work with First Nations Communities

At Roche, we are deeply committed to reducing health inequities across Australia. We have an organisational commitment to reconciliation and a dedicated focus on the unique healthcare challenges faced by First Nations communities.

Our Reconciliation Commitment: We are on a journey of reconciliation, building meaningful relationships with First Nations communities and organisations. We proudly acknowledge and respect the cultural heritage of the lands on which we operate. Our partnership with Jawun provides invaluable opportunities for cultural exchange, fostering meaningful relationships and strengthening our commitment to a more equitable future.

At Roche, we are dedicated to building meaningful relationships based on trust and respect. We are actively engaging with First Nations communities and groups to understand health priorities and collaborate on solutions that make a real difference. We are striving to contribute to a future where health equity is a reality for all Australians.

Our Aspiration

"Roche shares one sky with the First Nations Peoples of Australia; we walk on the same land, and in the same time."

Our aspiration is to walk, listen, and journey alongside Indigenous Partners with humility, fostering equal energy and power between us. We endeavor as a company to ensure that our aspirations do not sit parallel to our company's other strategies, but rather that reconciliation is an integral part of everything we do. Our focus and commitment is to forge equitable outcomes for all Australian patients and the communities that surround them, addressing in particular those gaps in Indigenous Health which align with Roche's expertise, strengths and capabilities."

The First Nations Eye Health Alliance (FNEHA) is the principal voice and Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye care peak body. FNEHA is a registered charity that utilises traditional and contemporary knowledge/pathways to develop equitable health approaches that stop preventable vision loss and blindness in First Nations people. FNEHA carries the vision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to see the enactment of equitable improvements in eye health and vision care outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Our work contributes to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, building towards a collective national approach to empower First Nations communities so that they are healthy and flourishing.

FNEHA was born out of key discussions at the 2022 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference (NASTIEHC) on Larrakia Country in Darwin, NT where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health professionals from across the country called for a dedicated body to lead the advancements needed to improve eye health and vision care outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

FNEHA provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in the eye care and vision sector along with their allies, a space to connect, learn and be supported. By becoming a member of The Alliance, you can help to strengthen First Nations leadership and voice within the eye health and vision care sector.



FNEHA Board & Secretariat 2024 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference



BECOME A MEMBER

The Alliance also provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in the eye care and vision sector along with their allies, a space to connect, learn and be supported. By becoming a member of the Alliance, you can help to strengthen First Nations leadership and voice within the eye health and vision care sector.



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NAATSIHWP
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